

This letter is superscribed :—

“To y^e right woo^r my most Louinge brother S^r Edward Altham Dwelling at marke hall in Essex

“Per a frend whome god preserue.

“Leaue this at one william watson’s House in y^e minories a gunsmith to be sente as aboue saide./”

As to the genuineness of these letters there can be no suspicion. Dr. Wilmot tells me that they form part of a correspondence between various members of the Altham family which a few years ago came into his charge as executor to the will of a lady connected with that family, that they have doubtless been always in safe keeping, and that they have never been in the hands of a dealer. The two letters mentioning the Dodo have been shown by me to my friend Mr. Bradshaw, the Librarian of the University of Cambridge, well known as a skilful palæographer, who, from the evidence of the handwriting, paper, and other *indicia*, chiefly appreciated by experts, declares them to be of the period to which their dates assign them.

Whether this Dodo reached England alive there is nothing to show. The only letter in the correspondence from Edward Altham to Emanuel is dated 3 January, 1628, or six months before the bird was shipped from Mauritius. Emanuel died in the fort of Armagon, on the coast of Coromandel, in 1635, having, in his last illness, had “all his p’ticular bookes of accompts and many other wrightings” burnt in his presence, as testified by a document to that effect, signed by four witnesses and now in the collection. I cannot find the name of Altham among the “Principall Benefactors” to the ‘Musæum Tradescantianum’ (1656), where Herbert’s name, on the contrary, does occur; but, as is well known, Sir Hamon Le Strange saw a live Dodo exhibited in London about 1638, and by 1634 a specimen had been given to the Anatomy School at Oxford*.

8. On the Lapwing of Chili.

By J. E. HARTING, F.L.S., F.Z.S.

[Received June 15, 1874.]

During the past few months a considerable number of specimens of the Lapwing of Chili, chiefly collected by Mr. Reed, have passed through my hands; and a tolerably good series is now before me.

On comparing these specimens with others from different localities on the eastern side of South America, as Cayenne, Bahia, and Rio, a marked difference is observable between them in point of size, the western bird being so very much larger and more robust than the eastern form.

Vanellus cayennensis, Gmelin, from Cayenne, was described by him as “*Vanello minor* ;” and if it is not invariably less than *Vanellus cristatus*, with which he compared it, the specimens

* Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. (ser. 2) iii. pp. 136, 137.

which I have seen from the above-named eastern localities seem to justify the observation that it is never larger. Now the bird from Chili, which is found also in Patagonia, and, I believe, in the Falkland Islands, is always considerably larger than *V. cristatus* and à fortiori than *V. cayennensis*. Size, however, is not the only respect in which it differs from the last-named. It will be seen on comparison that the black colour of the forehead extends further back, and encroaches more upon the cheeks; the same colour upon the chin (which in *V. cayennensis* is restricted to a small patch between the rami of the lower mandible, very faintly edged with white, and passing into a mere streak which almost disappears before it reaches the black of the breast) has in the western bird the appearance of one broad patch of equal width, extending from the base and beyond the rami of the under mandible quite down to the black of the breast, into which it merges. This broad patch is very conspicuously edged with a white line, which extends from the black breast-plate upwards in front of the eye and over the crown, and so downwards on the other side, separating conspicuously the black forehead and throat from the grey of the crown, nape, and sides of the neck.

The crown, nape, and sides of the head and neck in *V. cayennensis* are brown (or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say greyish brown), instead of pearl-grey as in the other; and, to judge by the specimens which I have examined, *V. cayennensis* always has a well-developed occipital crest of black feathers, while in the other the crest is not only more scanty in appearance, but the few feathers of which it is composed are grey rather than black. In this respect it approaches *Vanellus resplendens*, Tschudi (*V. ptilosceles*, Gray), from the Peruvian Andes, which is not crested.

It may be suggested that the crest is only an adornment during the breeding-season, like the frill of *Machetes pugnax*; but if so, this is contrary to what occurs in the case of *Vanellus cristatus*, and, moreover, most of the specimens forwarded from Chili were procured at a time when the birds must have had eggs or young.

In addition to this, the tibia is feathered much lower down than in *V. cayennensis*, the tarsus is proportionally shorter and more robust, the toes proportionally shorter and less attenuated.

On account of these and other less-marked differences, it appears to me that the western may be readily separated from the eastern form; and I propose to distinguish it accordingly as *Vanellus occidentalis*.

The synonymy, habitat*, and diagnosis of the two species stand as follows:—

VANELLUS CAYENNENSIS (Gmelin).

Parra cayennensis, Gmelin, Syst. Nat. i. p. 706 (1788).

Tringa cayennensis, Latham, Ind. Orn. ii. p. 727 (1790); id. Gen. Hist. ix. p. 300 (1824).

* For the present, the habitat given in each case must be considered to be only provisional, until the geographical distribution of the two becomes better known.

Charadrius lampronotus, Wagler, Syst. Av. Charad. n. 48 (1827).

Vanellus cayennensis, Schlegel (part.), Mus. P.-B. *Cursor*. p. 57 (1865); Sclater, P. Z. S. 1867, p. 591.

Hab. Venezuela, Guiana, Amazonas, Brazil, Uruguay, Buenos Ayres.

Diagn. *V. fronte et gula nigris; stria angusta a mento ad pectus nigra ducta; verticis medio brunneo; cervice alba; occipitis fusci crista nigricante; regione parotica et colli lateribus brunneis; dorso virescenti-purpureo; tectricibus alarum exterioribus albis, primariis nigris; spinis alarum carnosis; pectoris fascia lata nigra; abdomine crissoque albis; cauda a basi ad medium alba, altera parte nigra, apicis margine albo. Rostro rubro, apice nigro; pedibus rubescentibus.*

Long. tot. 11·5-12 poll., rostr. 1·2, alæ 8·5, tib. nud. 1-1·3; tars. 2·75-2·9, dig. med. 1·4.

VANELLUS OCCIDENTALIS, mihi.

Parra chilensis, Molina, Saggio sulla Stor. Nat. del Chili, p. 205 (1810).

Vanellus cayennensis, Bridges, P. Z. S. 1841, p. 94, 1843, p. 117; Gay, Faun. Chil. i. p. 400 (1847); Cassin, Gillis's Expl. Exped. p. 195 (1855); Schlegel (part.), Mus. P.-B. *Curs.* p. 57 (1865).

Vanellus chiliensis, Yarrell, P. Z. S. 1847, p. 54.

Hab. Chili, Patagonia, Falkland I. (?).

Diagn. *Similis V. cayennensis sed major; occipite subcristato; tibie plumis longioribus, tarsis pedibusque robustioribus. Fronte et gula nigris; stria lata a mento ad pectus nigra ducta, linea alba marginata; verticis medio cinereo; cervice albida; regione parotica et colli lateribus cinereis; dorso virescenti-purpureo; tectricibus alarum exterioribus albis, primariis nigris; spinis alarum flavicantibus; pectoris fascia lata nigra; abdomine crissoque albis; cauda a basi ad medium alba, altera parte nigra, apicis margine albo. Rostro rubro, apice nigro; pedibus rubescentibus.*

Long. tot. 15-15·5 poll., rostr. 1·2-1·3, alæ 9·7-9·9, tib. nud. 6-7, tars. 2·8-2·9, dig. med. 1·4-1·5.

If the habits ascribed by Molina to his *Parra chilensis* are those of the present species, as seems probable, his account of the bird is the fullest which has appeared. It is not altogether free from doubt, however; for Molina's bird is described as having a small fleshy protuberance on the forehead, a peculiarity which is not observable in the present species. Translated from the Italian his description runs somewhat as follows:—

“This bird being well armed defends itself with spirit against all animals, and repulses them by striking at them furiously with its spurs. Notwithstanding that its toes are well divided, it never perches on trees or dwells in elevated spots, but is always found in the plains, where it feeds on worms and insects. It nests amongst

the herbage, and lays only three eggs, rather larger than Partridges' eggs, of a dusky colour variegated with black, and better-flavoured than hen's eggs."

"The male and female always keep together; and one rarely sees them in flocks. When they perceive that any one is looking for their eggs, they quietly retire as far as they can from the nest, squatting down on the grass, nor do they show themselves except at a distance and without manifesting the least alarm; but should they see the intruder approaching their cherished brood, they rise upon the wing and dart down at him with the greatest fury.

"This trait (which they share in common with the Lapwing) and the other above-mentioned peculiarities, or characteristics, at first induced me to place it in the same genus, calling it *Tringa chilensis*; but the small fleshy protuberance on the forehead* compelled me to leave it in the genus *Parra*, from which, however, it differs by the moderate size of its toes.

"It has been observed that these birds never call out at night except when they hear some one pass. On this account the Araucanians make use of them in time of war, as so many sentinels on the alert to give warning against a surprise of the enemy.

"In times gone by the gentry of the country amused themselves by hawking at these birds with trained Falcons; but now they shoot them with guns.

"Their flesh is not inferior to that of the Woodcock."

A similar account is given more briefly by Gay in his 'Fauna Chilena,' vol. i. p. 400; and Bridges (*l. s. c.*) has not added much more to the history of the bird. He describes it as "one of the most common birds found on the plains near the Andes and in other parts of the country," and found its food to consist of worms, locusts, &c. The eggs he described as excellent eating and resembling those of the Lapwing of England, *Vanellus cristatus*—a description which was subsequently confirmed by Yarrell, who gave a more detailed account of their size, colour, and appearance (P. Z. S. 1847, p. 54) from specimens which had been forwarded to him from Chili.

9. On a Small, Tufted, Hornless Deer from the Mountains near Ningpo. By R. SWINHOE.

[Received June 16, 1874.]

(Plate LIX.)

My friend and correspondent Mr. A. Michie wrote me a letter, dated Shanghai, December 19, 1873, as follows:—"I send another note to overtake the mail, to tell you I have just found a new deer

* This was a mistake on the part of Molina. No such protuberance is observable in the birds before me.